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JACK ANDERSON

Irate Readers — When I reported last June that the United States was shipping potentially sensitive government publications to the Soviet Union as part of an information exchange program, the Kremlin bellowed like a wounded bear.

The Soviet press denounced me and Sen. Jim Sasser (D-Tenn.), who was investigating the situation, as "fire-eating reactionaries." A number of Soviet representatives contacted Sasser to point out that the Russians send our government publications, too.

They're correct. About 1,000 Soviet publications are routinely sent here, including Soviet Woman, Sputnik, News from the Ukraine, and even Soviet Military Review. Sasser was not impressed, noting that the Kremlin does not send us intelligence agency publications such as we send the Russians.

Sasser has discovered that the Navy, for example, sent the Soviets a manual on maintenance and repairs for U.S. guided missiles. We have also provided the Russians with an in-depth analysis of mainland China's industrial capacity.

And we send the Soviets "Trends in Communist Media," an analytical report that remains classified for six months after publication, at which time it is sent to the Russians.

EXCERPTED